



Afghan soldiers train under supervision
of U.S. Marines at Afghan National Army
Academy, Forward Operating Base Geronimo

U.S. Marine Corps (Orlando Perez)

Building the Security Force **That Won't Leave**

By WILLIAM B. CALDWELL IV *and* NATHAN K. FINNEY

When asked how long the United States should stay [in Afghanistan], one elder said: “Until the moment that you make our security forces self-sufficient. Then you will be welcome to visit us, not as soldiers but as guests.”

—SENATOR CARL LEVIN, SPEECH ON THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

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The Taliban and other insurgent elements fighting against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) are convinced that they will succeed if they simply wait us out. They think they only have to maintain their influence in areas like Helmand and Kandahar Provinces, and when coalition forces begin to leave in the next few years, they will be poised to control the entire country.

What these enemies of GIROA fail to grasp is that they will not be able to wait out the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which are now on the verge of becoming the enduring force in the country. Insurgents will not be able to outlast a national force that will not go away. As North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has stated, “[the Taliban] might think they can wait us out. But within a year or so, there will be over 300,000 Afghan soldiers and police trained and ready to defend their country. And they can’t be waited out.”¹ The mission to develop these forces, and the capacity of their government to sustain them into the future, belongs to NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM–A).

The mission of building partner capacity is not only a strategic necessity for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), but also a national security imperative that has been dictated by all levels of the U.S. Government. In the National Defense Strategy, our military has been directed to “support, train, advise and equip partner security forces to counter insurgencies, terrorism, proliferation, and other threats.”² To support this position, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wrote two articles in *Foreign Affairs* that charge the U.S. military with “building partner capacity: helping others defend themselves or, if necessary, fight alongside U.S. forces by providing them with equipment, training, or other forms of security assistance . . . [because] building the security capacity of other countries must be a critical element of U.S. national security strategy.”³

Although the U.S. defense establishment has progressed since the Secretary’s

call for an increase in our capability to build partner capacity, there is still more to be done. NTM–A has been charged with building Afghan capacity primarily through four areas: the development of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police (ANP), the development of the Ministries of Interior (MoI) and Defense (MoD), improving the country’s human capital, and investing in Afghanistan’s physical capital. In each of these areas, the capacity we need to build must be applied at two levels: first, through direct growth and development, and second, by indirectly enabling Afghan capacity to endure by teaching Afghans both to nurture and to develop themselves. As we move to transition the campaign, our focus switches from the first level (training Afghans to fight) to the second (training Afghans to train themselves). The actions that NTM–A has taken to address these areas can serve as a case study in building partner capacity.

Developing the Afghan National Army and Police

In Afghanistan, improved capacity requires an increase in the quantity and quality of the ANSF. One cannot take precedence over the other, and the ANSF will neither grow into an effective force, nor endure in a self-sustaining manner without equal attention to both. We have found that to create an enduring, self-sustaining Afghan security force requires leaders—leaders of character, competence, and integrity. Therefore, we have begun to focus on increasing the quality of the personnel in the ANSF. This is important because it creates professionalism and integrity in those institutions with which the local population has the most daily contact. These contacts between citizens and their professional and honorable public servants enable mutual credibility and respect. When the Afghan people have faith and trust in their government institutions, they can focus on their daily lives and not be worried about extortion, threats of criminal activity, and basic survival.

To increase quantity, training facilities have been expanded and throughput increased. Additionally, faced with low recruiting last year, it was apparent we would not reach our growth objectives without taking drastic action. Working with Afghan leadership, together we implemented several initiatives to mitigate low recruiting, including pay raises, tripling the number of recruit-

ers, and standing up a Recruiting Command. In addition, we contracted for a major Afghan media recruiting campaign, authorized a further increase in recruiters, and set up 16 mobile subrecruiting stations to coincide with the start of the challenging summer months and the decrease in operations in winter.

To increase quality, programs were reoriented to place a greater emphasis on the factors that lead to a professional security force: education, training, and leadership. Education has taken two forms. First, at basic training and through traveling training teams, soldiers and police are provided basic literacy. Second, enduring institutions like the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA), the National Police Academy (NPA), and the Air School were established to develop officers who have the knowledge and skills to increase the professionalization of their force. Training has been reformed to include a necessary increase in quality, from marksmanship to tactics to driver training. Additionally, the former police training model of “Recruit-Assign” was replaced with a new model that makes training mandatory for all police recruits—creating a “Recruit-Train-Assign” model. Leadership training has been increased through courses for all levels of leadership, from junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to senior officers. Troop Leader Courses, NCO Staff Courses, and a Sergeants Major Academy are now developing a nascent NCO Corps. The NMAA, Company Commanders courses, a Staff College, and the National Security University are all either running or in the process of being created to develop a competent Officer Corps.

NTM–A supports the overall mission of building Afghan capacity by producing the forces required to provide security and stability for the population, and to safeguard the nation’s borders. Impressively, the ANA grew fast enough to meet the growth goal of 134,000 troops by October 2010 3 months early. Its quality is also improving through increased institutional trainer support and subsequently, once fielded, by partnering with coalition forces. Most significant of all, increased resources and dedication to leader development institutions like the NMAA are developing educated, capable, and motivated leaders who will continue to professionalize the ANA.

To support troop movement and logistical support, Afghan air capability has grown through the acquisition of additional C–27 airframes. To increase leader

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development, an air school for education and training has been developed. The Afghan Air Force (AAF) has increased its capabilities in battlefield mobility, casualty evacuation, forward observer training, humanitarian support, and mission planning.

The ANP also met its growth goal (109,000 personnel by October 2010) early, though its growth is less robust than the ANA. The greatest strides in building ANP capacity and quality are in leader development, primarily through the establishment of professional development schools and systems. This increase in quality has stemmed from many programs set into place when NTM-A was activated. Professional education has grown to 236 concurrent courses, with Afghans leading almost half of the instruction. The MoI has developed and instituted a National Police Strategy and Plan that provides the vision for a future that their personnel can follow, leading to a dramatic increase in their execution of budgets and programs (to 99 percent executed in this last solar year, ending in March 2011). The greatest growth in quality, which has made a significant impact on both the quality of officer sent to the field and the public's perception of their law enforcement officers, is the increase of literate patrolmen. Today we have over 70,023 ANSF in training, together with 75,682 who have completed training. We have educated them to almost twice the literacy rate of the country as a whole (approximately 50 percent versus 28 percent), producing better police by decreasing corruption, increasing stewardship, and reducing drug use. This is gradually garnering more respect from the Afghan people.

Recent quantity debates have occurred in the international community about the overall size of the ANSF, primarily regarding how it will be funded. Early this year, discussions began about the size of the ANA and ANP, or more precisely, whether the ANSF should grow from 305,600 personnel (to be attained by the end of October this year) to 352,000, or whether it should be enlarged

further to 378,000. The position of NTM-A is that growth to 352,000 personnel will allow the Ministries of Interior and Defense to sustain the momentum created in the last 20 months, including building a stable institution that includes most enablers required for basic army and police forces. Regardless of the end strength of the ANSF, one of the greatest challenges to growing beyond current levels (284,500 personnel going to 305,600 by the end of October) is retention. *Retention* is defined as the ability to retain personnel, whether by reenlistment, prevention of injury to include death, or mitigation against desertion. Historically, retention issues have plagued both the ANA and ANP, preventing the long-term development of soldiers and police and predictable growth in end strength. To maintain growth to 305,600 and beyond, NTM-A has set a reenlistment goal of 60 to 70 percent within the ANSF. Both the MoD and the MoI have been able to attain this goal, with the ANA reaching 69 percent in March and the ANP 60 percent (in that same month), as examples. Attrition (including losses due to medical reasons/death and desertion) remains the most difficult aspect of retention. NTM-A has set a goal of 16.8 percent attrition per year or less (or 1.4 percent each month). Some months, segments of the ANSF are able to attain this goal, to include the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), the ANA Commandos and Special Forces, and the ANA Corps in the north and west. However, high-tempo operations in the east and south have led to high attrition rates in the ANA Corps in those areas, as well as the elite national Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). Overall, ANA attrition rates were 27 percent annually in March and 12 percent in the ANP.

Much work has been done in the past 20 months to address retention and attrition. In fact, most measures taken by the MoI, MoD, and NTM-A have focused on this area. Pay has been increased, coalition units have been partnered with Afghan units, mandatory literacy courses have been created more widely, and all measures have been taken to create a more predictable rotation in and out of high-conflict areas of the country. These actions have steadily created an increase in retention and overall quality of the ANSF, but more must be done by all stakeholders to continue to decrease attrition.

Although our inputs (trainers, funding, and leadership) and outputs (trained ANSF, facilities built) are key to building the capac-



ity of the ANSF, our main focus remains on outcomes. As David Kilcullen has written, "These indicators [inputs] tell us what we are doing, but not the effect we are having [outcomes]."²⁴ There are three outcomes that we are interested in for the ANSF. First, that ANSF units are capable of doing in the field what they are trained to do. Second, that the people served by the ANSF have sufficient confidence in their security forces to take the necessary actions to promote stability and conduct their normal business (for example, engaging in commerce, children attending

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Afghan National Police Crisis Response Unit members clear compound during training conducted by ISAF

U.S. Air Force (Joseph Swafford)

school). Finally, that the Afghan people are willing to resist attempts by insurgents to reassert themselves (providing actionable intelligence, refusing to support insurgent elements, and engaging in the political process). These outcomes will indicate the success with which we have developed the capacity of the ANSF to provide security.

Leader development remains our number one priority, and it is essential to developing a professional ANSF. To be blunt, ANSF leadership deficiencies—across the spectrum of insufficient numbers of junior

officers and NCOs, gaps in the midgrade ranks, and corrupt senior officers—pose the greatest threat to our Afghan allies. Significant efforts have been made to improve leader development programs, but critical shortages in officers and NCOs persist. There is a need to continue to invest energy and creativity into ANSF leader development, and we will continue to focus on junior officers and NCO programs. To this end, ANA and ANP leader development courses have been developed, reorganized, and improved to support increased throughput requirements of

the fielded force. Steps have also been taken to ensure that higher quality and highly literate officers are distributed based on operational need, not cronyism or favoritism.

NTM-A has created a three-pillar strategy that includes experience, education, and training. Leader development for most begins with training that is conducted through professional military and law enforcement courses taught at the Regional Training Centers. Education is provided through civilian schools (high school diploma or college degree) and military channels such as NMAA,

experience is gained through a career that is set up to be progressively more challenging and broad enough to create a professional leader

Afghan Army War College, Command and Staff College (CSC), and the Sergeants Major Academy. Finally, developing leadership capacity within the ANSF is based on experience. As in any security force, experience is gained through a career that is set up to be progressively more challenging and broad enough to create a professional leader.

Developing the Ministries of Interior and Defense

Improving the ministerial capacity to generate, train, equip, and sustain the ANSF is critical to a self-sustaining force. A lack of quality leaders, mid-level staff, and an efficient bureaucracy at the ministerial level poses challenges to accomplishing this, but these shortfalls are mitigated through dedicated advisors. Day in and day out, these advisors work with key leaders in the Ministries of Interior and Defense to increase their capacity and capability to generate, train, and sustain their forces. This has been done in three key areas: structural changes, crafting policies and laws (in support of Parliament), and developing a logistics system.

One of the most effective differences the ministries have had on the generation, training, and sustainment of their forces is through policies and laws. These have created a *tashkil* (a formal document detailing the size and composition of the force) and sustainable budgeting, funding, and procurement systems; and in the near future they will deliver a comprehensive personnel system that includes merit-based promotion, established career paths, and retirement systems.

One such policy instituted by the Afghan government is the ethnic balance of the ANSF. Both the ANA and the ANP have strict guidelines that the number of personnel from each ethnic group in Afghanistan is properly represented in their security forces. Of particular concern, given the fact that the insurgency is made up of fighters primarily from Pashtun tribes in the south, is the representation of that ethnic group in the ANA and ANP. Looking at the overall numbers, these policies have been very successful: 45 percent

of the ANA and 43 percent of the ANP are Pashtun, compared to 44 percent nationally. While the overall inclusion of Pashtuns has been successful, of real concern is the inclusion of Pashtuns from southern Afghanistan, as this is the demographic most hostile to the government and most likely to provide the insurgency with fighters. Specific recruitment programs have been instituted to increase their participation in the ANSF. The programs include radio marketing and billboards as well as recruiting teams led by a general from that area that assist in the formation of Provincial Recruiting Councils. These measures have been largely successful, increasing recruitment of southern Pashtuns in early 2011 to 3.3 to 3.5 percent per month. This still does not meet the MoD's near-term goal of the 4 percent necessary to fully integrate southern Pashtuns into the ANSF, but recruitment has been trending upward since late 2010, when all of the recruitment measures were instituted in earnest.

Finally, to sustain the force, the ministries have created a regional logistic system. This system has developed a Regional Logistic Center in each region, pushing supplies beyond the typical hubs in Kabul and Kandahar. There is still much to do in this area. Soldiers and police in the field are consistently short of supplies, from food to clothing. The first step will be to create a "push" system, where logistics planners identify what should be needed at each unit and push it to them, not waiting for a request. This system provides supplies to those in need before they otherwise would miss them. In the current "pull" system, units request supplies only when they are needed. There is no forecasting supplies they *will* need, so units often go without. This is unacceptable in any security force, and even more in one that is consistently in combat and facing an insurgency.

Each of these areas has gotten better because of the work of dedicated Afghan leaders, with the support of knowledgeable coalition advisors. There remains much to do, however, and advisor manning levels must continue to improve, increasing our support to a larger proportion of the Afghan leadership. Ministerial development is the most important aspect of building enduring capacity for the ANSF, and we must treat it that way.

Improving Afghanistan's Human Capital

Literacy and leader development are critical to ensuring that the partner capacity—

building activities we conduct in Afghanistan are enduring. They are the foundation upon which the future capacity and capability of the security sector will be built.

In the same article in which Secretary Gates called for an increase in our ability to conduct partner capacity-building missions, he also stated, "There has not been enough attention paid to building . . . the human capital (including leadership skills and attitudes) needed to sustain security over the long term."⁵ We have recognized the severe shortage of human capital in Afghanistan, particularly for leaders. Increasing this asset is a Herculean task. The human capital needed to recruit, train, equip, and sustain a security force and organize sustainable ministerial systems is severely underdeveloped. With literacy rates for the overall population at roughly 28 percent and among the ANSF recruits at less than 14 percent, there is a low educational base from which to draw. This affects both the training of soldiers and police and their job performance once training is complete.

When NTM-A was activated last November, it was clear that illiteracy was affecting the speed and depth of instruction. Training had to be provided through hands-on instruction—each element had to be demonstrated. The inability to provide written material to "prime the pump" for instruction means every new block of instruction must start from scratch.

Even more important than improving training, illiteracy affects the professionalization of the ANSF. Key elements of job performance for capable security forces are tied to the basic ability to read letters and numbers and to write. How do we professionalize a soldier who cannot read a manual on how to maintain a vehicle, read a serial number to distinguish his weapon from another, calculate trajectory for a field artillery call for fire, or write an intelligence report for a higher command? How do we professionalize a policeman who cannot read the laws he is enforcing, write an incident report, or sign a citation? How can the rule of law be enforced if he cannot build a case based on written evidence? How can either a soldier or policeman ensure accountability of both superiors and subordinates if he cannot read what equipment his unit needs or a pay chart to know what he should receive?

Creating the highly structured systems that are needed to run complex organizations

within the security sector requires literacy. An educational foundation must be established to create the literate security forces and ministerial bureaucrats who can be trained to run district, provincial, and national institutions effectively. Unlike previous voluntary literacy training efforts, we are beginning the process by providing mandatory literacy training to all soldiers and policemen. From basic training to unit training, and including educational facilities like the National Police Academy and NMAA, we are moving the ANSF from illiteracy to basic functional and then advanced literacy.

Investing in Physical Capital

The development of ANSF capacity requires significant physical (infrastructure) and economic (funding to build industries) support. This has made NTM-A the largest foreign investor in Afghanistan. Investment in everything from construction of training centers to boot factories, from literacy teachers to food procurement through the Afghan First, Afghan Made Initiative, is creating ripple effects across Afghan society.

Money that is now spent in the Afghan military industrial complex is jump-starting industry. Manufacturing companies in the private sector have begun making boots, uniforms, and other items for soldiers and police. These companies and those like them could just as easily transition from military to civilian goods. Workers making boots and uniforms can make shoes and clothes for sale on the open market. The huge investment that the international community is providing for the Afghan military base, whether in the ANSF or the civil base that supports it, is building more than just the capacity of the ANSF. It is also building the human and physical capital required to jump-start the Afghan economy and society.

Obstacles

There have been and remain significant challenges to NTM-A accomplishing its mission to build Afghan capacity and ensure that GIRoA is able to sustain it. Systems within the U.S. Government must be addressed to ensure that future efforts to increase the capacity of critical security forces will be successful. Inflexible personnel systems and inappropriate approval and funding structures must be improved to better provide for this mission.



U.S. and Afghan National Army soldiers secure landing zone during air assault mission in Sarobi district, Afghanistan

U.S. Army (Zachary Burke)

Personnel systems within the U.S. military are not designed to support building capacity within partner nations. The systems do not possess the flexibility or selectiveness needed to identify required skill sets and deploy personnel to the right positions. As stated earlier, one of the greatest impacts we have on building partner capacity is through our provision of advisors to the security ministries. There are no current processes within our personnel systems to ensure that we select the leaders with the right rank, skills, and temperament to serve in these positions. The majority of selections for trainers, instructors, and advisors are ad hoc; these billets are primarily filled with personnel who need a deployment and have the correct rank. Skills and experience are rarely determining factors.

Beyond personnel issues, our current structures for funding and authorities are inappropriate. Within the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), we largely possess only authorities and funding to support military forces. This is also true of most NATO countries. When NATO gives multinational support, this, too, delivers only military and/or defense forces. In the Afghan environment, and in most areas where we would be building partner capacity, the police may be more important than military forces. To truly bring stability to an area and build partner capacity, the ability to support interior forces (police and gendarmerie) is essential.

In addition to governmental funding, the ability to acquire private sector support is also required. Building partner capacity,

as described previously, calls for more than just teaching how to shoot a weapon or arrest a criminal. Building human and physical capital to professionalize security forces is just as important. We currently do not have the ability to secure funding from the private sector without a lengthy and laborious contracting process. We need the authority to match the right capability within the private sector with the requirement in the partner nation. Sometimes this may mean only one company can deliver specific capabilities; the operational context occasionally demands that speed of delivery take precedence over peacetime contractual regulations.

Solutions

To fully implement the U.S. National Defense Strategy and policy put forth by Secretary Gates to build partner capacity, we must make significant changes. Our personnel system must be able to identify and select the appropriate personnel to train, instruct, and advise other nations' military and police leaders. These jobs must be treated with the same importance as equivalent jobs within our own Services. Advisors in particular should go through a selection process similar to those being selected for advisor positions in DOD. An advisor for a Minister of Defense or Minister of Interior should be selected based on the same criteria used for the military advisor to the Secretary of Defense. These advisory positions are critical nodes for building partner capacity. The training for these advisors should also be commensurate

our personnel system must be able to identify and select the appropriate personnel to train, instruct, and advise other nations' military and police leaders

with their critical effect in building partner capacity. This training must include courses that impart advisory skills (particularly at the ministerial level), language, culture, and scenario-based exercises, which teach through challenging situations.

The authorities and funding provided to forces that are building partner capacity must be better tailored and more flexible. The Afghanistan Security Forces Fund should be given greater flexibility. There are more ways to support and build the ANSF than just buying equipment or building facilities. The greatest effect we can have is by partnering and advising. We need the flexibility of funds to support coalition forces to provide these capabilities.

Many solutions to NATO's structure and orientation have been addressed in the recently published paper on the new strategic concept.⁶ First, NATO must orient itself not only to provide security for its members, but to "place a premium on helping host nation security forces to improve their own ability to maintain order and to protect non-combatants from harm."⁷ This reorientation will protect member states before threats come to their shores. Building partner nation capacity will "require working with an effective mix of partners to piece together the diverse elements of a single shared strategy."⁸ This strategy must include interior forces (police and gendarmerie) and those with the capabilities to develop them. NATO must also "review [their] financial rules"⁹ to include the funding and support of these interior forces. Finally, NATO nations must "minimize national caveats that they attach when contributing troops to Alliance operations."¹⁰ These caveats can damage efforts in Afghanistan, and will do the same in future efforts if not kept in check. All NATO nations want to ensure the safety and security of their personnel, but they must also ensure that caution does not hinder the ability to accomplish the mission. During a mission that includes building partner capacity, training

in dangerous areas and partnering with host nation forces are highly probable. Caveats must be kept to a minimum to allow a greater probability of success.

Much progress has been made filling NATO trainer shortfalls as well as filling positions to the appropriate rank, skill, and knowledge. From the aftermath of the Lisbon Summit in November 2010 to the release of our current statement of requirements, NTM-A saw an addition of approximately 440 coalition trainers, a 45 percent increase. These trainers came from 15 partner nations, increasing the overall national contributions to the training mission to 32 nations. These trainers have been invaluable to the improvement of specific skills within the ANSF, particularly the operation and maintenance of Russian-made aircraft (for example, Mi-17 cargo helicopters) and policing skills (with personnel trained by national police forces like the Italian Carabinieri, the French Gendarmerie Nationale, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police).

Finally, forces that are building partner capacity must be given a more flexible system to engage with the private sector. A quick and flexible system must be created to approach and procure support and funding from private sector organizations, whether a nongovernmental agency, corporation, or university. Building partner capacity requires the authority to match the right capability within the private sector with the requirement of the partner nation.

In for the Long Haul

Ultimately, the task of building the capacity of the ANSF is a "duel in strategic endurance"¹¹ with both the insurgent forces and the international community. The duel with the former sees insurgents trying to wait us out, while the international community is trying to determine the best way to support the effort while moving toward the exit. In contrast, NTM-A, in some form or another, will have an enduring presence supporting the ANSF. Whether it evolves into an Office of Security Cooperation like those in our Embassies across the globe or something more robust and far-reaching, America will have a significant military relationship with Afghanistan for years to come.

Recovery from 30 years of warfare does not occur in 1 year or 3. Political patience and a large initial investment in building capacity are needed to restart an Afghan society

and economy ravaged by sustained conflict. The payoff for this patience and investment is a professional security force that is able to provide security, creating room for the foundation of prosperity and stability that will support subsequent generations for decades to come, and providing a reliable ally to support a positive influence in the region.

No matter how the political winds may blow in the future, whether here in the United States or among our coalition partners, we must leave the Afghan people with an enduring capability and force generation capacity to provide security. By educating and developing the Afghan National Security Forces, we ensure that Afghanistan will be safe in the hands of a security force that won't leave—their security force. To deliver this education and development, we need a reenergized and reapplied focus within the U.S. Government and DOD, dedicated to building our partners' capacity across the globe. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, monthly press briefing, June 7, 2010, available at <www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_64083.htm>.

² Department of Defense (DOD), *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: DOD, June 2008), 15.

³ Robert M. Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance," *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2010), 3.

⁴ David J. Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 58.

⁵ Gates, 4.

⁶ "NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement," Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, May 17, 2010.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹ Anthony Cordesman, "Realism in Afghanistan: Rethinking an Uncertain Case for the War," Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 16, 2010.